

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2479

Introduced by Assembly Member Villines

February 23, 2006

An act to amend Section 7271 of the Food and Agricultural Code, relating to noxious and invasive weeds, and making an appropriation therefor.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2479, as introduced, Villines. Noxious and invasive weeds.

Existing law provides that there is within the Department of Food and Agriculture Fund the Noxious Weed Management Account the funds in which are made available to eligible weed management areas or county agricultural commissioners for the control and abatement of noxious weeds according to an approved integrated weed management plan. Existing law provides that only 5% of the funds in the account shall be made available to the Department of Food and Agriculture for carrying out provisions relating to management of noxious and invasive needs, developing noxious weed strategies, seeking new biological control agents, conducting workshops, and appointing a noxious weed coordinator and weed mapping specialist.

This bill would make various findings and declarations regarding the impact of noxious and invasive weeds on California. This bill would increase the percentage of Noxious Weed Management Account funds that shall be made available to the department to 10%. This bill would also appropriate \$2,500,000 annually from the General Fund to be deposited into the Noxious Weed Management Account.

Vote: $\frac{2}{3}$. Appropriation: yes. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature hereby finds and declares each of the following:

(a) The spread of certain harmful, nonnative species of plants causes enormous damage to the environment and economy of California.

(b) The destructive impact of invasive and often poisonous noxious weeds is profound, affecting California's cropland, rangeland, forests, parks, and wildlands.

(c) Enormous sums of private, state, and federal resources are lost through decreased land productivity, degradation of wildlife habitat, and outright destruction of crops, livestock, wetlands, waterways, watersheds, and recreational areas caused by noxious and invasive weeds.

(d) The estimated lost crop productivity caused by noxious weeds is seven million four hundred thousand dollars(\$7,400,000) nationwide, a large proportion of which is attributable to California.

(e) Noxious and invasive weeds have destroyed large portions of riparian habitat along creeks, streams, rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and other bodies of freshwater in California, damaging the integrity of the riparian system by altering erosion, sedimentation, flooding, and fire.

(f) Proper noxious and invasive weed management in riparian habitats is critical to sustaining California's freshwater supply.

(g) The invasive weed *Arundo donax* (giant reed) has established large colonies across the state, most notably in southern California, where one in 10,000 acre area of riparian habitat the weed has been estimated to have consumed more than 30,000 acre-feet of water each year, or enough water to meet the yearly freshwater needs of 150,000 persons.

(h) The invasive weed yellow star thistle has infested more than 20,000,000 acres, roughly 22 percent of the state, and is quickly expanding in the Sierra and into the Coastal Range, making it the most common invasive plant in California, choking out native plants, and killing horses who eat its poisonous early season growth.

(i) California has a noxious weed management program for the purpose of managing and eradicating noxious weed though

1 specified local weed management areas. These programs to
2 prevent, control, manage, and eradicate nonnative and noxious
3 weeds have emphasized information sharing, education, and
4 public awareness and participation as critical to the success of
5 prevention, control, and eradication efforts.

6 (j) Local weed management groups have benefited greatly
7 from the commitment of the state to fund weed eradication, and
8 these weed management groups have been successful in
9 identifying and eradicating invasive and noxious weed species in
10 their regions.

11 SEC. 2. Section 7271 of the Food and Agricultural Code is
12 amended to read:

13 7271. (a) The Legislature designates the Department of Food
14 and Agriculture as the lead department in noxious weed
15 management and the department is responsible for the
16 implementation of this article in cooperation with the Secretary
17 for Resources.

18 (b) There is hereby created in the Department of Food and
19 Agriculture Fund the Noxious Weed Management Account.

20 (c) Funds appropriated for expenditure by the secretary for
21 purposes of this article may be spent without regard to fiscal year
22 and shall be allocated as follows:

23 (1) ~~Eighty-five~~*Eighty* percent of moneys in the account shall
24 be made available to eligible weed management areas or county
25 agricultural commissioners for the control and abatement of
26 noxious weeds according to an approved integrated weed
27 management plan.

28 (2) Ten percent shall be made available toward research on the
29 biology, ecology, or management of noxious and invasive weeds.

30 These research moneys shall be made available to qualified
31 researchers through a grant program administered by the
32 department. Proposals shall be evaluated in consultation with the
33 Range Management Advisory Committee, with emphasis placed
34 on funding of needs-based, applied and practical research.

35 (3) ~~Five~~*Ten* percent shall be made available to the department,
36 and shall only be used for the following purposes:

37 (A) Carrying out the provisions of this article.

38 (B) Developing of noxious weed control strategies.

39 (C) Seeking new, effective biological control agents for the
40 long-term control of noxious weeds.

1 (D) Conducting private and public workshops as needed to
2 discuss and plan weed management strategies with all interested
3 and affected local, state, and federal agencies, private
4 landowners, educational institutions, interest groups, and county
5 agricultural commissioners.

6 (E) Appointing a noxious weed coordinator and weed mapping
7 specialist to assist in weed inventory, mapping, and control
8 strategies.

9 SEC. 3. The sum of two million five hundred thousand
10 dollars (\$2,500,000) is hereby appropriated annually from the
11 General Fund and deposited into the Noxious Weed Management
12 Account which shall be available for expenditure pursuant to
13 Article 1.7 (commencing with Section 7270) of Chapter 1 of Part
14 4 of Division 4 of the Food and Agricultural Code.